

**CLAIM AMENDMENTS**

Please amend the claims (~~strikethrough~~ indicating deletion and underline indicating insertion) as follows:

1. (currently amended) A lancing device comprising:

a housing;

a cassette removably mounted within said housing, said cassette comprising at least one lancet having a lancet body and a protective cap;

a piston for propelling the lancet along a path of travel, said piston having a lancet coupling portion for releasably engaging and retracting the lancet to separate the lancet body and the protective cap along a retraction portion of the path of travel of the lancet, and thereafter advance the lancet along the path of travel into a lancing position;

at least one guide member associated with each lancet, the guide member being aligned transversely to the path of travel of the associated lancet within the cassette for engaging the separated protective cap of the associated lancet to guide the protective cap out of the path of travel; and

a retainer position within the cassette adjacent ~~the~~ each said at least one guide member to retain the separated protective cap.

2. (previously presented) The lancing device of Claim 1, further comprising a biasing element for moving the protective cap out of the path of travel of the lancet after separation of the protective cap from the lancet body.

3. (canceled)

4. (previously presented) The lancing device of Claim 1, wherein the protective cap comprises a pair of recesses in opposed sides thereof, and wherein the at least one

guide member comprises a pair of guide posts slidably engaged in said recesses to guide said protective cap out of the path of travel of the lancet.

5. (original) The lancing device of Claim 1, further comprising a cocking mechanism for arming the piston.

6. (previously presented) The lancing device of Claim 5, wherein the cassette comprises a plurality of the lancets and the lancing device further comprises an advancing mechanism for sequentially advancing the lancets into an operating position, and wherein the cocking mechanism and the advancing mechanism are coupled together so that they operate together.

7. (original) The lancing device of Claim 5, wherein actuation of the cocking mechanism retracts said piston to cause separation of the lancet body and the protective cap.

8. (original) The lancing device of Claim 1, wherein said cassette comprises a plurality of lancets radially arranged about an axis.

9. (original) The lancing device of Claim 8, wherein said cassette further comprises radially extending guides defining the path of travel of the lancet.

10. (original) The lancing device of Claim 8, wherein said plurality of lancets lie in a plane, and wherein the piston propels the lancet along a path of travel within that plane.

11. (original) The lancing device of Claim 8, further comprising a cocking mechanism for sequentially advancing the cassette through a series of positions wherein one of said plurality of lancets is engaged with said piston.

12. (original) The lancing device of Claim 11, wherein actuation of the cocking mechanism drives the piston to separate the lancet body from the protective cap.

13. (previously presented) The lancing device of Claim 8, wherein said cassette further comprises a plurality of spring elements aligned for engagement with the protective caps of said plurality of lancets to move the protective caps out of the path of travel after separation of the protective cap from the lancet body.

14. (original) The lancing device of Claim 13, wherein said retainer further comprises a plurality of guide tongues for defining the path of travel of said lancets.

15. (original) The lancing device of Claim 13, wherein each of said spring elements comprises a generally U-shaped loop.

16. (previously presented) The lancing device of Claim 1, wherein the lancet body and the lancet coupling portion of the piston comprise interengaging coupling elements, said interengaging coupling elements comprising a tapered lead-in section for aligning said lancet body and said piston for engagement.

17. (original) The lancing device of Claim 1, wherein each lancet further comprises a resilient tongue extending from the lancet body.

18. (original) The lancing device of Claim 1, wherein said housing resembles a wristwatch housing, and further comprising a wristband.

19. (original) The lancing device of Claim 1, further comprising sample collection and analysis media.

20. (original) The lancing device of Claim 1, wherein said cassette further comprises an alignment indicator for identifying proper alignment of said cassette with the housing upon installation.

21-68 (canceled)

69. (previously presented) The lancing device of Claim 6, wherein actuation of the cocking mechanism actuates the advancing mechanism to advance the cassette to sequentially engage each of said plurality of lancets with said piston.

70. (previously presented) The lancing device of Claim 2, wherein the biasing element moves the cap transversely out of the lancet travel path within a plane that is perpendicular to the lancet travel path.

71-77 (canceled)

78. (currently amended) A lancing device comprising:

a housing;

a cassette removably mounted within said housing, said cassette comprising at least one lancet having a lancet body and a protective cap;

a piston for propelling the lancet along a path of travel, wherein said piston releasably engages the lancet and causes separation of the lancet body and the protective cap along at least a portion of the path of travel of the lancet;

wherein said cassette comprises a plurality of lancets radially arranged about an axis; and

wherein said cassette further comprises a retainer having a plurality of spring elements extending therefrom, said spring elements engaging the protective caps of said plurality of lancets to move the protective caps out of the path of travel after separation of the protective cap from the lancet body, the retainer and the protective caps comprising separate components.

79. (previously presented) The lancing device of Claim 78, wherein said retainer further comprises a plurality of guide tongues for defining the path of travel of said lancets.

80. (previously presented) The lancing device of Claim 78, wherein each of said spring elements comprises a generally U-shaped loop.